



REQUEST FOR A DECISION

Livable Community Committee – open session – Dec 18, 2025

To: Councillor Ruth Breen, Chair, and Members of the Livable Community Committee
From: Meredith Cooper, Policy & Strategic Planning Manager, TRC
Date: November 21, 2025
Title: Off-Leash Dog Trails – Pilot Project Outcomes and Next Steps Recommendations

ISSUE:

In September 2023, City Council adopted a resolution that directed staff to “identify areas in the City of Fredericton that may be designated as off leash for dog walkers”. In April 2025, City Council adopted by-law amendments to facilitate a pilot project from May – October 2025 to allow off-leash dog trails in designated areas within Killarney Lake Park. The pilot project is now completed, and staff are seeking City Council direction regarding next steps for off-leash dog trails.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

A. Recommendation:

It is recommended that the following resolution be forwarded to City Council for consideration:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Council for the City of Fredericton hereby directs the Legal Division to prepare an amendment to By-law No. S-11, A By-law respecting Animal Control, to designate an off-leash area within the municipality, to permit Off-Leash Areas to be in effect annually between May and October, and to make such other amendments to give effect to the said changes.

B. Other options:

City Council may wish to give other direction staff.

SITUATION, BACKGROUND & DISCUSSION:

SITUATION:

- a. Current (extant) Direction: On April 28, 2025, City Council adopted amendments to By-law No. S-11 to facilitate the commencement of an off-leash dog trails pilot project in Killarney Lake Park from May - October 2025.
- b. Alignment: This matter aligns with People Focused objectives for “creating a safe and inclusive community that offers an abundance of diverse recreational and cultural experiences” as outlined on the City’s 2022-2026 Strategy Map.
- c. Link to CAO goal or inflight: This item is considered a CAO priority pursuant to the above noted City Council resolution and direction to staff.
- d. Why is this coming to Council and why now?: The pilot project is now completed and public feedback has been gathered. Staff are seeking City Council direction regarding next steps for off-leash dog trails.

BACKGROUND:

On September 14, 2023, City Council adopted the following resolution: “BE IT RESOLVED that the Livable Community Committee hereby directs the Chief Administrative Officer to identify areas in the City of Fredericton that may be designated as off leash for dog walkers”. In September 2024, staff presented the concept of an off-leash dog trail pilot project in Killarney Lake Park to City Council for review and consideration. On October 15, 2024, City Council adopted a resolution directing the Legal division to prepare by-law amendments as required to facilitate the designation of an off-leash area in Killarney Lake Park as part of a pilot project to be in effect between May and October 2025. By-law amendments were adopted by City Council in April 2025 and the pilot project commenced on May 15, 2025.

DISCUSSION:

As a growing and densifying City, the need for amenities that enable dog owners to exercise their dogs has increased. Dog-owning residents have expressed a desire to see the City provide off-leash dog trail opportunities. While the City has several fenced off-leash dog parks, these are heavily used and are not suitable options for some dogs. Off-leash dog trails are available in many communities including Saint John and Halifax and are typically located within designated areas of municipal parks.

Following consultation with the Fredericton Trails Coalition and Wostawea Ski Club, staff presented a pilot concept for trialing off-leash dog trails within the City. A pilot project approach allowed staff to assess the operational feasibility as well as public response. The pilot project involved designation of 4.77kms of trails within Killarney Lake Park for use as an off-leash dog area, from May through October. This timing considered consultations with key stakeholders, including Wostawea, which expressed concern regarding the potential for conflicts between skiers and dogs. The pilot project was planned for non-winter months to ensure these concerns would be mitigated. It is also noted that the designated off-leash area was located approximately 1km from the parking lot adjacent to the lodge. Rules signage was posted at the park entrance (e.g. only allowing dogs off leash that have strong recall behaviour, dogs with dangerous behaviour history are prohibited, picking up after your dog, ensure dogs are licensed and vaccinated, carry a leash and use it when needed, don’t approach off-leash dogs, etc.) while directional and

informational signage was installed to guide users to and denote where users were entering/exiting a shared, off-leash area.

Following completion of the pilot project on October 15th, a public survey was posted through Engage Fredericton. The off-leash dog trails pilot page received 1,100 views and 148 survey responses were submitted. Below is a summary of public feedback received through the survey:

Did you bring a dog when walking in the off-leash area?

68% Yes, always 23% No, never

How satisfied were you with the off-leash area?

68% Satisfied/very satisfied 24% Dissatisfied/very dissatisfied

How safe did you feel using the off-leash trail?

70% Safe/very safe 22% Unsafe/somewhat unsafe

Have you experienced any issues while using the off-leash trails?:

63% No Issues 20% Uncollected Dog Waste 13% Aggressive Dogs

Would you like to see the off-leash dog trails continue?

80% Yes or w/improvements 17% No

When asked what could be improved the top three responses were:

- More garbage cans
- Trails closer to the parking lot
- Better signage (for locating the off-leash area)

Other comments included:

- Monitoring to ensure dogs are off-leash only in designated areas (7)
- No off-leash areas (6)
- More off-leash trail areas (5)
- Fenced off-leash area (5)
- Lake access for off-leash dogs (2)
- Winter off-leash areas (2)
- Better surface material on trails (smaller granules) (2)
- Designated off-leash area (no kids, bikes, ATVs) (2)
- Benches on trails (1)

It was also noted by two respondents that they experienced issues with a dog bite while visiting the off-leash area. However, Animal Control has confirmed that no dog bite incidents in Killarney Lake Park were reported during the pilot project timeframe.

Key stakeholders were also consulted following completion of the pilot project. The Fredericton Trails Coalition has indicated they would like to see the off-leash area within Killarney Lake Park continue. Wostawea continues to have concerns regarding the potential for conflicts between dogs and skiers if off-leash use were to be permitted during the winter months, particularly given that the off-leash pilot occurred on designated cross-country ski trails.

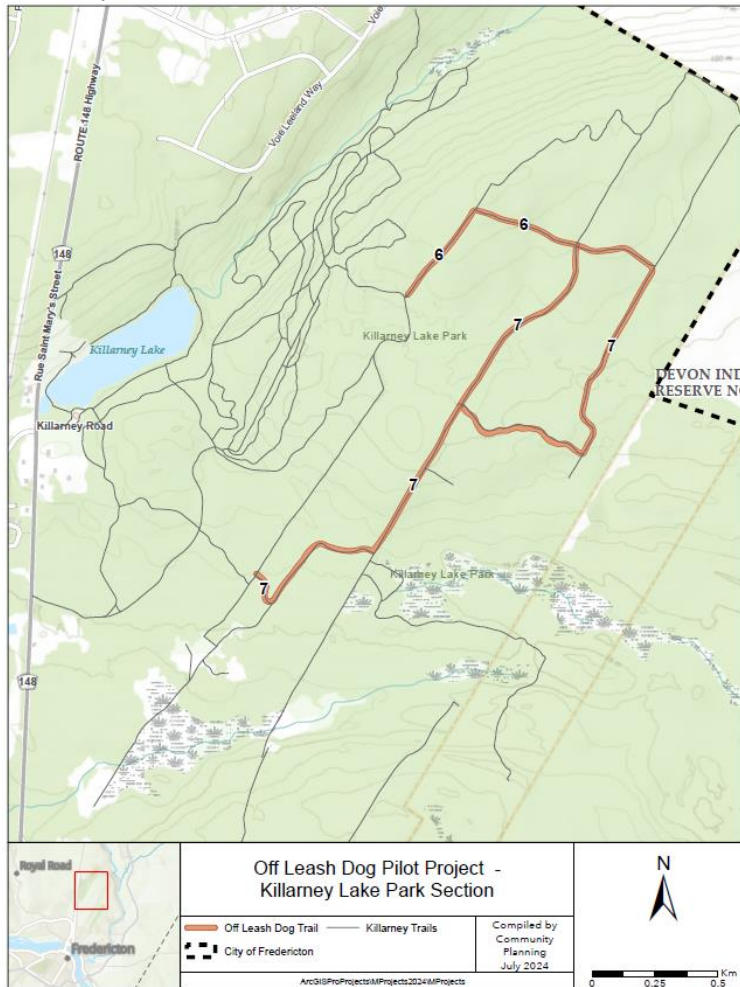
Overall, staff feel the pilot project was a success. In reviewing public and stakeholder feedback it is staff's assessment that there is strong public desire for the continuation of an off-leash dog trail area within the City. With nearly 1,600 acres, Killarney Lake Park covers a large area and has a vast trail network that can allow for off-leash dog trails in designated areas. Staff note the feedback from users regarding the importance of improving signage. This is important both for directing those desiring to use the off-leash area, but also to ensure park users preferring to avoid an off-leash dogs area are well informed of where the designated area is located.

Given this, staff are recommending that an off-leash area within Killarney Lake Park be permitted annually on a seasonal basis. Specifically, that off-leash dogs be permitted in designated areas from May through October. This will ensure the potential for off-leash dog and skier conflicts is mitigated during winter months. Staff are also proposing the expansion of the off-leash area to include Trail 1 and a connection between Trail 1 and Trail 7 as shown in the below map. This responds to public feedback that the off-leash area started too far (1km) from the parking lot and that an off-leash trail area should be available closer to the parking lot. Staff feel that extending the designated off-leash trail area to include these additional sections of trail ensures the off-leash dog trail area is more accessible, while also creating a balance that ensures an extensive trail network remains for individuals who do not want to walk in an off-leash dogs area. Staff would also undertake a review of the signage implemented during the pilot project to identify where improvements are needed.

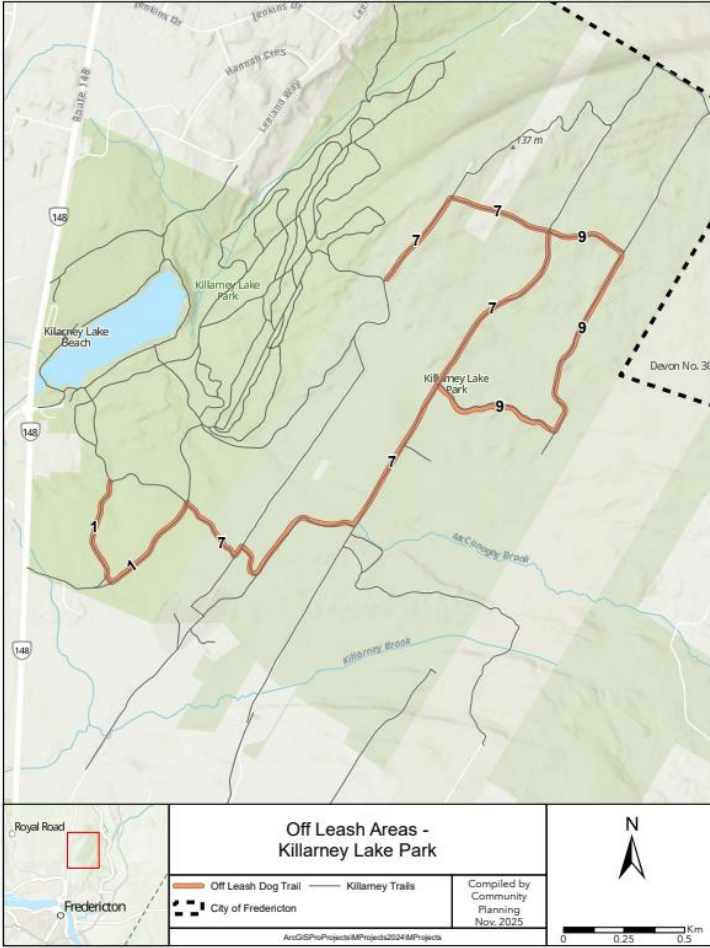
The need for garbage cans was also among the top three concerns from survey respondents. It is noted that Parks & Trees will be reviewing its service standards in the coming months and will consider this public feedback as part of their assessment.

Killarney Off-Leash Trail Section:

Pilot Layout:



Proposed Seasonal Use Layout:



It is difficult to suggest trail options that are away from people, residences, and nature. Therefore, for City Council’s awareness, staff note that ‘off-leash’ means dogs will travel in and through natural areas adjacent to permitted off-leash trail sections. This can cause damage to the natural environment and disturb wildlife. Additionally, the park will not have designated enforcement to ensure dogs are off-leash only in designated areas. Any issues or complaints will be reviewed and addressed as required.

Pending City Council’s direction, staff will prepare by-law amendments, review signage and develop a communications plan.

Staff are recommending that the off-leash dogs area in Killarney Lake Park shown in the above map be permitted from May through October, annually.

- **FINANCIAL:** Costs would be limited to communications and signage which will be covered through the City’s operating budget.

- **LEGAL:** To ensure proper enforcement, amendments to the by-law are required. The Legal division will work with the Recreation & Culture division and other divisions as required to prepare by-law amendments for City Council's review and consideration.
- **COMMUNICATIONS:** The Recreation & Culture division will work with Corporate Communications and other divisions as required for educating and informing the public.

Does this proposal move the City of Fredericton closer to its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets of 50% reduction by 2030 and net-zero by 2050 in line with the City's Corporate Energy & Emissions Plan and/or Community Energy Emission Plan?

- Moves us towards GHG reduction targets
- No change in GHG emissions
- Moves us away from GHG targets but there are trade-offs with other Council or Municipal Plan priorities (*identify which priorities*)

Does this proposal improve the City of Fredericton's resilience to the impacts of climate change in line with our Climate Change Adaptation Plan?

- Moves us towards climate resilience
- No change in resilience
- Moves us away from climate resilience but there are trade-offs with other Council or Municipal Plan priorities (*identify which priorities*)

SPOKESPERSON: Meredith Cooper, Manager, Policy & Strategic Planning

Prepared by: *Meredith Cooper, Manager, Policy & Strategic Planning*

Approved by: *Dave Seabrook, Director, RTC*

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Admin Report_Off-Leash Dog Trails Pilot Outcomes and Next Steps_Dec 4-2025.docx
Attachments:	- Off-Leash Dog Trails_Pilot Outcomes and Next Steps.pptx
Final Approval Date:	Dec 10, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Seabrook, David

Hart, Steven